

THE REGION

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'Quiet civil war' advocate pleads guilty

► *Norman Somerville admits to owning illegal machine guns and agrees to cooperate with prosecutors looking for "angry militiamen."*

By Ed White
The Grand Rapids Press

A man who had an arsenal of fire at his rural compound near Cadillac, including two heavily armed "war wagons," pleaded guilty to possessing machine guns and pledged to cooperate in the hunt for other shadowy rebels.

"It's the best thing for me to do, sir," Norman Somerville replied when a federal judge in Grand Rapids asked if he was reluctant to admit guilt.

After his capture 10 months ago, Som-

erville was wild-eyed and anxious as he warned of a "quiet civil war" in the countryside.

That anti-government swagger was gone Wednesday as he explained he owned 12 machine guns, most made from kits and then modified into illegal weapons.

"Very easy to come by. You can find them on the Internet," Somerville, 44, explained.

Authorities found much more last fall during a search of his 40-acre property, about 15 miles northwest of Cadillac.

Agents discovered an underground bunker, thousands of rounds of ammunition, hundreds of pounds of gunpowder and manuals on guerrilla warfare, "booby



Norman Somerville

traps" and explosives.

There were chilling pictures of President Bush and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld with the cross hairs of a high-powered rifle scope drawn over them.

Finally, there were Somerville's self-described war wagons: a van and Jeep Cherokee outfitted with machine guns.

"The war wagons have been rendered harmless and are now in the junk yard," Assistant U.S. Attorney Lloyd Meyer said.

Informants told authorities Somerville was angry over the fatal shooting of Scott Woodring in Newaygo County and had plans to ambush state police by causing a car accident.

Woodring, a former militia member, was killed by police on July 12, 2003. A week earlier, Woodring shot and killed a state police trooper who had entered his home after Woodring resisted arrest on a warrant for criminal sexual conduct.

Somerville was peacefully arrested in October while shopping at Home Depot

during a rare trip outside his compound.

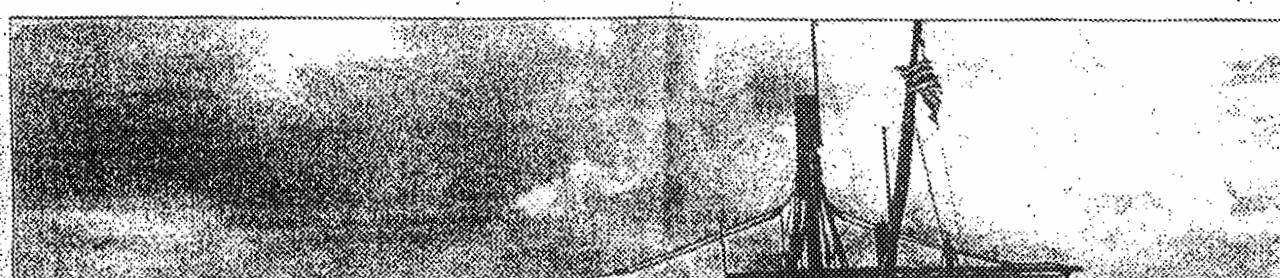
He faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison for having a machine gun, though he hopes his cooperation with authorities could reduce any punishment.

"We're focusing on a small group of angry militiamen who espouse violence and arm themselves to commit violence," Meyer said.

"A machine gun has only one purpose: to mow down human beings like sheaves of wheat," he said. "We are looking under every rock in Michigan, including the Upper Peninsula, to get every one of them."

Somerville told the judge that seven of his 12 machine guns were given to other people. He said he had no job before his arrest and was living off a "substantial" inheritance from his parents.

U.S. District Judge Gordon Quist also took guilty pleas from Somerville's allies: Donald Koshmidar II, 38, who had a machine gun, and Jeffrey Horvath, 24, who committed a crime by not telling authorities about the weapons.



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U.S. Department of Justice

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May 18, 2004

Mr. Joseph H. Doele
Grand Plaza Place, Suite 450
220 Lyon Square, NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Re: ***United States v. Norman David Somerville***
Case No.: 1:03-CR-239

Dear Mr. Doele:

Mr. Somerville did an outstanding job in the grand jury last month.

Based on Mr. Somerville's substantial assistance, I intend to present a proposed superseding indictment to that same grand jury on Wednesday, May 26, 2004, adding another defendant.

I know that Mr. Somerville has been getting impatient. It is imperative for him to understand that every delay has been because of his substantial assistance in the investigation. Every delay will redound to his benefit if he stays the course, continues to cooperate by providing reliable, truthful and complete information. All his time in custody will be credited towards his ultimate sentence.

I intend to tell the judge of his patience and cooperation when I ask for a sentencing reduction.

I will do my absolute best to get you a fair, beneficial plea agreement before June 1, 2004, so that Mr. Somerville can be in a position to plead guilty at the final pretrial conference scheduled for the first week of June.

Please call if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

MARGARET M. CHIARA
United States Attorney

LLOYD K. MEYER
Assistant United States Attorney

LKM/lkm

Sent via Facsimile and U.S. Mail

cc: ATF Special Agent M. Semear
FBI Special Agent R. BirdSong

EXHIBIT A